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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #87
December 1978

SECRETARY BERGLAND VISITS THE NFC.....Coinciding with the Management Council Conference in New Orleans, Secretary Bergland visited the NFC and dedicated the new Honeywell computer. In addition, the Secretary addressed the NFC employees and met with the Management Council members at a breakfast meeting.

REGULATION WRITING AND EDITING COURSE.....The response to the offering by the Graduate School and GPA for the course in regulation writing and editing was so overwhelming that a second session has been scheduled for January. Preliminary indications are that this course will be filled shortly. If sufficient additional requests for the course are received, a third section will be held at a later date to be determined. This course is designed primarily for those who write regulations which appear in the Federal Register.

The cost of the course is \$150. An AD-281 must be submitted to GPA for each nominee. (Contact: Claude Gifford, GPA, ext. 78005)

HELP FOR TROUBLED EMPLOYEES.....More than 27,700 Federal workers received counseling for alcohol, drug, emotional or personal problems during the year ending September 30, 1977. Of these, 11,400 were counseled for alcohol or drug problems, 61 percent more than in the year before.

According to Thomas A. Tinsley, Director of CSC's Bureau of Retirement, Insurance, and Occupational Health, the statistics "do not mean that the number of employees having such problems is increasing, but rather that agency programs to identify and constructively assist these employees are improving significantly."

The counseling has helped 75 percent of the employees with alcohol or drug problems bring their performance back to an acceptable level.
(Administrators Alert, CSC)

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION LAW BOOK.....Barbara Lindemann Schlei, Administrator of AMS, has co-authored with Paul Grossman, a comprehensive casebook/treatise covering the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other laws prohibiting discrimination in employment. It analyses the issues in employment discrimination law, provides strategy suggestions for attorneys, and presents the major cases in employment discrimination. While intended primarily for lawyers and law students, the book has substantial value for those with responsibilities for compliance.

MAILMOBILE IS HERE!.....The Office of Operations and Finance is planning to test two Mailmobiles for delivery of mail in the downtown USDA complex.

The Mailmobile is a self-propelled vehicle that travels a predetermined route at a speed of approximately 100 feet per minute. The Mailmobile is 24" wide, 68" long and 51" high. Its guidance system follows a practically invisible fluorescent guidpath that is stimulated by ultraviolet light and tracked by photo-electric sensors. The Mailmobile is equipped with an obstacle detection system that will prevent it from running into a person, structure, etc. It also emits an audible signal as it travels.

The first Mailmobile has arrived and will be fully operational by December 15. Its route will cover the 3rd, 4th and 5th Wings and Independence Avenue and C Street corridors on the second floor.

Hopefully, the test will permit an increase in efficiency and a reduction in staff hours used for route delivery. (Contact: Don Adams, O&F, ext. 74061)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FEDERAL GRANT AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ACT (P.L. 95-224).....The Departmental notice to implement P.L. 95-224 is now circulating for final clearance and should be issued by mid-December. The Act, which specifies the appropriate use of contracts, grants and cooperative agreements in conducting Government business is to be fully implemented by February 3, 1979. It is highly probable that some Departmental agencies will have to change from the way they have been using contracts, grants or cooperative agreements for their programs in the past to coincide with the OMB Government-wide guidelines that are included in the Departmental notice.

The Act also calls for OMB to do a detailed study aimed ultimately at developing a comprehensive system of guidance or regulations for operating Federal Assistance Programs. The Department has volunteered people from O&F, FS, SEA, AMS, APHIS and SCS to directly participate in the study effort. We anticipate OMB will actually begin the study before the end of this year. Once the study begins, we will have to provide much information for the study and we will be asked to comment on the results of the study and any recommendations. Our ability to shape the final results of the study to the best advantage for Departmental programs will largely depend on USDA agency responses to the total study effort. (Contact: Don Manns, O&F, ext. 75630)

OMB CIRCULAR A-102, REVISED DRAFT.....The Office of Federal Procurement Policy, OMB, is issuing a completely revised draft of the Procurement Standards, Attachment O of Circular A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants-in-Aid to State and Local Governments. This attachment, which has been in the revision process for about three years, reflects the views of public interest groups representing State and local governments. These groups had been unhappy with the previous draft regulation. Agency comments will be requested shortly. (Contact: Don Manns, O&F, ext. 75630)

USDA ADMINISTRATIVE PROCUREMENT.....USDA administrative procurement for FY 78 totaled \$623,494,000; a 22% increase over FY 77. This Department continues to be one of the leading government agencies in awarding contracts to small businesses. Over 72% of the procurement dollars went to small business concerns. Awards to minority businesses were just under 3% of total procurement. (Contact: Tony Cooch, O&F, ext. 77527)

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM.....The Department employed a total of 995 students under the Cooperative Education Program for Baccalaureate Students during FY 1978. Agreements were signed with 182 colleges and universities throughout the country, covering 419 duty locations.

The following chart compares the employment of baccalaureate students under cooperative education during fiscal years 1977 and 1978. As the figures indicate, participation in the program increased significantly in FY 1978.

<u>Ethnic Groups</u>	<u>FY 1977</u>		<u>FY 1978</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Black	90	44	121	74
Spanish-Speaking	56	17	93	25
American Indian	10	2	11	4
Oriental	8	4	25	13
Other	217	170	292	337
TOTAL	381	237	542	453

The Department also participated in the newly established Cooperative Education Programs for Graduate and Associate Students. Fourteen students were employed at 11 different duty locations under the Graduate Program, with agreements signed with 14 colleges. Agreements were signed with 13 colleges to employ 31 students under the Associate Degree Program. Students worked at 21 different work locations.

All three programs provide excellent sources for expanding employment opportunities in the professional and technical fields to qualified minorities, women, and physically handicapped individuals. All agencies are urged to review their personnel needs and develop plans to utilize cooperative education as a means to meet those needs during FY 1979. The Department coordinator and individual agency coordinators can provide information and assistance on the programs. (Contact: Patricia Killen, OP, ext. 72435)

FLEXITIME UPDATE.....The Department now has 15 agencies and staff offices operating under a modified form of flexitime. These are APHIS, SEA, ESCS, FAS, FNS, FS, SCS, FGIS, OGSM, GPA, OP, REA, FCIC, O&F and the Management Staff. In addition, AMS has adopted a true flexitime system; the first in the Department. One other agency, ASCS, has a proposal pending in the Office of Personnel. (Contact: Verna Deane Brown, OP, ext. 73185)

USDA EMPLOYEE APPEALS.....The Employee Appeals Division of OP handled 612 cases in FY 1978; an increase of 8% over the previous year. Increases occurred in grievances, complaints and classification appeals and there was an increase from 209 to 225 in appeals sent to the Federal Employee Appeals Authority, the Appeals Review Board and the Civil Service Commission. Decreases were registered in EEO cases, down from 155 to 127, and court cases, down from 11 to 9.

The major problem area in FY 1978 was in processing grade denial actions and assistance for processing WGI's and guidelines was provided to several agencies. (Contact: Lawrence Cavallaro, OP, ext. 77467)

MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.....The Department has reached 65% of the FY 1979 goal of \$38 million that would triple procurements from minority-owned firms. In FY 1978, minority firms received \$1,887,000 in subcontracts from USDA and \$12,846,000 in direct competition awards. Over \$10 million was awarded to 8(a) certified companies in FY 1978 for a total of \$25,052,000 awarded to minority businesses for services rendered. (Contact: Paul McCloskey, OEO, ext. 77117)

DISPOSAL OF FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT.....The Office of Safety and Health Management and the Office of Operations and Finance have been working with the GSA concerning the disposal of scrap furniture and equipment. This problem, particularly acute in the South Building, has created a safety hazard by blocking hallways and has also resulted in property damage.

This situation which has resulted in serious violations of the building fire codes requires cooperation from agencies. It is important that all agencies follow existing disposal procedures for furniture and equipment. GSA will make arrangements to remove all furniture and equipment now in the halls. (Contact: Joe Cindrich, OSHM, ext. 78247)

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES.....Upcoming deadlines for submitting articles and publication dates are as follows:

<u>Deadlines</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>
January 10	January 15
February 7	February 12
March 7	March 12
April 11	April 16
May 9	May 14
June 13	June 18

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